

Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EA-11 NEA-10 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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USLO PEKING

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, UR, XO

SUBJ: PRAVDA OVSERVER ON DIEGO GARCIA

1. SUMMARY: EXTENSIVE SOVIET PRESS REACTION TO EXPAN-

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SION OF DIEGO GARCIA FACILITY HAS BEEN ELEVATED TO

QUASI-OFFICIAL LEVEL WITH PUBLICATION OF AUTHORITATIVE "OBSERVER" COMMENTARY IN PRAVDA FEB 27. ARBATOV PRIVATELY HARKED BACK TO 1971 SOVIET TRIAL BALLOON ON NAVAL LIMITATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. OVSERVER, AN ANONYMOUS SIGNATURE RESERVED FOR COMMENTARIES APPROVED AT HIGH LEVEL, REVIEWS FOREIGN REACTION TO US/UK AGREEMENT ON EXPANDING DIEGO GARCIA TO "HUGE" AMERICAN MILITARY BASE. IN SUMMARIZING OFFICIAL CONDEMNATION BY LITTORAL STATES, COMMENTARY FEATURES INDIAN, INDONESIAN AND MALAGASY STATEMENTS AND MENTIONS OTHER NEGATIVE GOVERNMENTAL REACTIONS FROM BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, MALAYSIA, AND THAILAND. IT RHETORICALLY ASKS WHY U.S. AND UK INCREASING THEIR PRESENCE IN REGION AGAINST WILL OF PEOPLES.

3. DISMISSING ALLEGED SOVIET THREAT AS JUSITIFICATION FOR EXPANSION, OBSERVER QUOTES PASSAGE OF SOVIET -INDIA JOINT DECLARATION ISSUED DURING BREZHNEV NOVEMBER VISIT TO INDIA WHICH EXPRESSES WILLINGNESS TO SEEK FAVORABLE SOLUTION TO QUESTION OF MAKING INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE. REAL EXPLANATION FOR EXPANSION, OBSERVER ASSERTS, IS DESIRE OF PENTAGON "TO PROVIDE ITSELF WITH A MILITARY BRIDGEHEAD FOR ITS FAR-REACHING AIMS IN THIS STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT REGION OF THE WORLD." COMMENTARY GOES ON TO PLACE DIEGO GARCIA IN CONTEXT OF CONCERN AMONG "MILITARIST CIRCLES" OVER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL AREA. IT ALSO DRAGS IN CHINESE ANGLE, CHARGING THAT PRC VERBAL ENDORSEMENT OF INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE IS CONTRADICTED BY ITS EFFORTS TO JUSTIFY U.S. DIEGO GARCIA BASE THROUGH SLANDER OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY AND FLEET USE OF INDIAN OCEAN. MOREOVER, PEKING IS ALLEGEDLY BRUITING ITS OWN INTENTIONS TO ESTABLISH AN INDIAN OCEAN MILITARY PRESENCE.

4. ADHERING TO LINE SET OUT IN PREVIOUS COMMENTARIES, OBSERVER RECALLS DISPATCH OF U.S. NAVY VESSELS TO BANGLADESH COAST IN 1971 CRISIS AND "SHOW OF FORCE" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OFF ARAB COASTS DURING RECENT MIDDLE EAST CRISIS. IT CONCLUDES THAT DECISION OF U.S./UK "MILITARISTS" ON DIEGO GARCIA INCREASES THREAT TO INDEPENDENCE OF COUNTRIES IN THE REGION AND RUNS COUNTER TO ASPIRATIONS OF PEOPLES FOR PEACE IN INDIAN OCEAN AND ENTIRE WORLD.

5. COMMENT: OBSERVER PIECE COMES AFTER RETURNS ARE IN FROM INDIAN OCEAN GOVERNMENTS AND STANDS A NOTCH

BELLOW AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT PROTESTING DECISION. IT
IS PROBABLY MEANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO NEGATIVE REACTION
IN AREA WITHOUT GOING SO FAR AS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT
SOVIET INTERESTS ARE DIRECTLY AT STAKE.

6. LIKE OTHER COMMENTARIES ON SUBJECT, OBSERVER
ARTICLE CONTAINS NO ALLUSION TO BREZHNEV'S 1971
MENTION OF POSSIBLE NAVAL LIMITATIONS . SOME SOVIETS
PRIVATELY, HOWEVER, HAVE ALLUDED TO SOVIET INITIATIVES
ON THIS SUBJECT AND HAVE IMPLIED THAT U.S. HAS TAKEN
NEGATIVE ATTITUDE. IN ADDITION TO REMARKS OF RETIRED
SOVIET GENERAL TO "TIMES OF INDIA" (NEW DELHI 2506),
USA INSTITUTE DIRECTOR ARBATOV REFERRED TO THE BREZHNEV
PROPOSAL IN TALKING TO WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS GROUP
FEBRUARY 25. ASKED ABOUT GROWTH OF SOVIET NAVAL
STRENGTH, ARBATOV RIPOSTED WITH REFERENCE TO
BREZHNEV 1971 SPEECH, THEN SUGGESTED THAT TWO
COUNTRIES GET TOGETHER ON NAVAL LIMITATIONS IN
INDIAN OCEAN.
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